Reviews of The Dynamics of Performance Management

From review in Governance, Matt Andrews, Harvard University
“There is a plethora of books on why and how to do performance management in government. Don Moynihan’s new text does not fit into this set. Rather, it is one of a new and smaller variety of works that apply broader organizational theory and empirical analysis to better understand the performance movement. In particular, it breaks new ground in addressing questions about why performance management reforms are often adopted in limited forms, why these reforms seem to deliver different results to those expected and how the value of these interventions might manifest in unexpected ways. The book causes one to think about the way performance management might change organizations and management engagements themselves, rather than just instrumentally affecting end results...Moynihan obviously and refreshingly attempts to do more than laud or criticize performance management, rather interrogating it in an academically disciplined manner...Moynihan’s study convinces me that understanding organizational performance still requires understanding organizations more than producing performance information...a highly recommended addition to libraries on both performance and public organizations theory.”

From review in International Review of Administrative Sciences, Hans de Bruijn, Delft University of Technology
(multiple book review, including Geert Bouckaert and John Halligan, Managing Performance, and Wouter van Dooren and Steven van de Walle, Performance Information in the Public Sector)
“Donald P. Moynihan’s study aims to offer a reflection on the use of performance information and the need for a dialogue about this information. His study immediately seems to be more empirical than that of Geert Bouckaert and John Halligan...All in all I find this book entrancing. The life cycle of PM [performance management] follows more or less the following path: initially, formal system are designed and introduced, followed by an emergence of the positive effects as well as of the limitations, ‘paradoxes, contradictions and unsolvable problems’. In reaction to this, instruments are often developed to promote interaction and dialogue between principals and agents. Given the emphasis on the effects of PM, and on interaction and dialogue, the book nicely matches this life cycle, and contains many interesting findings.”

From review in Public Administration Review, Katherine Willoughby, Georgia State University
(multiple book review, including Patria de Lancer Julnes, Frances Stokes Berry, Maria P. Aristigueta, and Kaifeng Yang, eds., International Handbook of Practice-Based Performance Management)
“a wonderfully written text on the psychology of performance management...The strengths of Moynihan’s book include the variety of performance management reforms that he investigates, the multiple methodologies that he employs to examine these reforms, and, most importantly, the prescriptions that he provides for the consideration and use of performance information going forward...His approach is naturally more holistic than that of the Handbook, with a stronger nod to theoretical understanding of the relationships between and among organizations, individuals, and information. Perhaps his most important conclusion about
performance measurement and management is that performance measurement itself is not objective. Just as successful e-governance is about much more than just “the technology,” so, too, is successful performance-oriented reform about much more than just “the measurement.” A successful performance-oriented reform necessitates that stakeholders understand the context within which they are working, take hold of performance information, gain consensus about the data and its use, and then engage such information accordingly—performance data is just one type of information that can be used for management purposes, but is most effectively engaged if there is a shared understanding among stakeholders about what it means and for what purposes it is used.”

From review in *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Anne Khademian, Virginia Tech.

“Moynihan begins the study with an overview of the “era of governance by performance management,” and the “doctrine of performance management”...The implementation focus of this study provides a fresh perspective on performance management. At the intersection of political mandates and complex internal agency dynamics, performance management systems can be a policy tool for creative managers to remake organizational missions and retool an agency for accomplishing that mission...A particular strength of the work, as noted earlier, is the emphasis on the manager that matters, and the ways in which managers can utilize performance mandates for policy change...Moynihan has written an important book that reveals the potential of performance management in ways unanticipated by the doctrine. His work advances a Madisonian understanding of management reform that enriches the literature and our practical and theoretical understanding of performance management.”